

Divine immutability or the doctrine of predestination, which will not apply so extensively as to reduce it to an absurdity, (*Eductio ad absurdum.*) Since God is unchangeable, and has arranged everything beforehand, why need I pray at all ? The reply is—that the answer to prayer proceeds on the foreseen circumstance that the prayer will be offered—that if the man refuses to pray, he shall assuredly find it fixed that no answer is given. Should petulance insist on a farther reply, we think it enough to show that this is a style of objection which would apply to every species of human activity. Why need I be diligent, if it is arranged whether or no I shall get the object which I expect to gain by industry ? is the next form which the cavil may assume. If the objector is an ambitious man, we ask, why pursue so eagerly that expected honour, when he knows that it has been ordained, from all eternity, whether he shall secure it or no ? If he is a man of pleasure, we ask, why such anxiety to procure never-ceasing mirth and amusement, when he knows that it is pre-determined what amount of enjoyment he is to receive in this life ? Ah ! it turns out that the objection, which presses with no peculiar force upon the supposed Divine arrangements in regard to prayer, is a mere pretext to excuse the unwillingness of the person who urges it, for he discovers it only in those cases in which he is indisposed to act.

There appears to us to be a beautiful congruity in this method of answering prayer. Prayer is effectually answered, and yet there is no encouragement given, nor room allowed, to any possible evils, such as pride and self-confidence, or easy self-complacency and inactivity. If prayer and its answer had been connected as cause and effect, there might have been a risk, that when the person had prayed he would rashly conclude that exertion might now cease. But in the system now developed, while there is assuredly a connexion between the

entreaty and
the blessing, it is not a connexion in the
mechanical laws of
nature, but in the counsels of God ; and the
man who has
prayed, as he looks for the answer, feels that he
must fall in
with the Divine procedure. There is a wholesome
discipline
exercised by the very uncertainty (humanly
speaking) of the
means which God employs for sending the
answer, and the
person who has prayed is kept humble and
dependent, in the
exercise of a spirit of waiting and watchfulness.
He feels that